

To: Members of the Montana House Judiciary Committee

From: Richard Parker

CC:

Date: 18 February 2011

Re: House Bill 516

# Testimony

My name is Richard Parker and I reside in Bozeman, MT. I am employed by the Bozeman Public School District #7 as a mechanical engineer in the facilities department. I am a graduate of Montana State University. I served this country for six years operating a nuclear powerplant onboard the USS Abraham Lincoln with the United States Navy and was discharged honorably after many periods at sea including the support of a no-fly zone over Iraq. I pay my state taxes without complaint. In short, I am a law abiding, productive member of society who has an upmost respect for our rule of law in this state and nation.

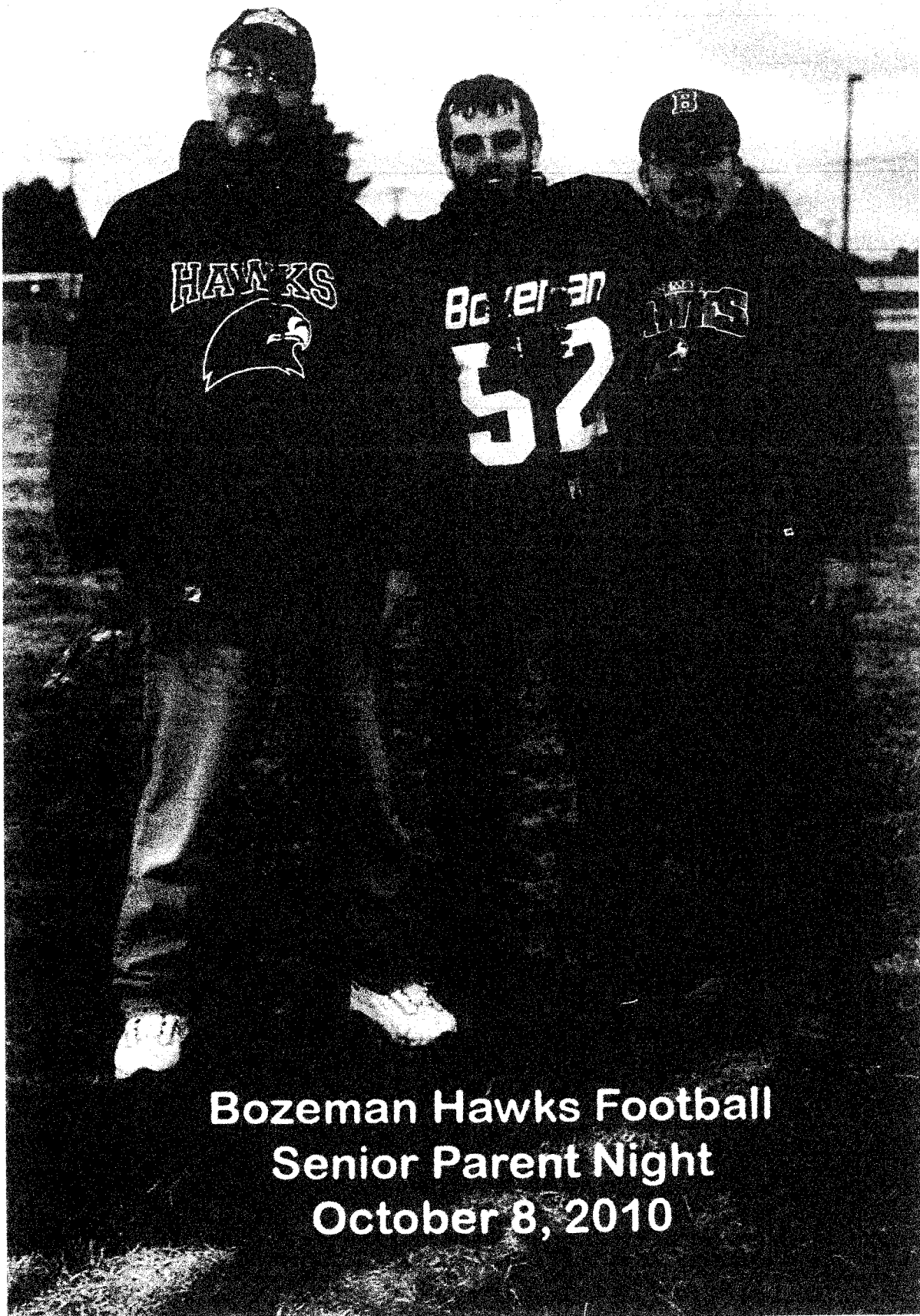
Respect is a two way street in my book and that is not happening in this state. I am also a gay man with a partner of 9 years and raising our 18-year-old son. A son who was a starting offensive lineman for the state championship Bozeman Hawks football team until a season ending knee injury and subsequent surgery in game 8. He has lettered in track, won the state power lifting competition, and holds a job slinging hash at a local restaurant. His grades are great, his work ethic even better, and his respect for others unmatched. He is one of the more well rounded kids on earth with an amazing sense of serenity. You may ask why am I stating all these facts? The reason is to dispel all the myths, stereotypes, and fears used to support prejudice against same sex couples and families. Myths like gays are pedophiles, cannot sustain a safe household to raise children, are not an integral, productive, and contributing members of society, etc. Many of these myths are generated from fundamentalist Christian groups with narrow-minded theological beliefs who view our family as immoral, wrong, and one that should not be accepted in our society. We are also, as a family, continually on guard to protect each other and our assets from the same people who rail to keep us unequal. Often you hear of gay men and women being the victims of violence and intimidation (house burning in Missoula, noose hung from Montana State University National Coming Out Day Display, tea party leader of Montana talking about how to hang fruits (referring to gays). How often do you hear of people being attacked simply because they are straight? That is why the Missoula City Council passed an anti-discrimination ordinance that includes gays in the list of classes to be protected. People who may be model citizens may be discriminated against solely because of there sexual orientation. That is wrong in ANY community. Period.

Luckily we live in a country where people from all walks of life are accepted, respected, and not hindered in their pursuits for freedom, privacy, and protection under the law as long as it does not infringe in the rights of others. The Montana State Constitution says, "All persons are born free and have certain inalienable rights. They include the right to a clean and healthful environment and the rights of pursuing life's basic necessities, enjoying and defending their lives and liberties, acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and seeking their safety, health and happiness in all lawful ways. In enjoying these rights, all persons recognize corresponding responsibilities." My partner and I are defending our lives and liberties constantly against these narrow-minded people. That is why I oppose house bill 516. This bill would reverse the Missoula city anti-discrimination ordinance making it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity because gays and lesbians are not a protected class according to Montana Code Annotated.

I find irony in this bill because the sponsor is a member of a political party which continually questions the federal government's power over the state government saying "what is good for the federal government does not mean it is good for Montana". I think that is what many city municipalities throughout the state are currently saying about the state government.

I find it even more ironic the bill is sponsored by a woman. Someone who, up until 1920, did not have equality in the voting booth until the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment was passed. I sure hope she realizes how fortunate she is to have had female trailblazers before her fighting off the wrongs of society of the day. For the sake of me, my partner, and our son, lets hope our fights for equality end up with similar results.

Attached is a picture a kid with two proud dads.



**Bozeman Hawks Football  
Senior Parent Night  
October 8, 2010**